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Professionalizing Gender: The Female Gothic, Beating Fantasies and the Civilizing Process

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GENDER

The Female Gothic, Beating Fantasies, and the Civilizing Process

Diane Long Hoeveler

On the dark and stormy night of February 7, 1823, Ann Radcliffe, pious and devoted wife, paragon of domestic virtues, died raving mad. Or so rumor had it.[1] Condemned by the critics of the gothic novel as the original "madwoman in the attic," Radcliffe created what we have come to recognize as the potent, primal versions of the female gothic, only to be consumed in death by its fantasies. Her novels, particularly *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and *The Italian*, established the pattern that has persisted into contemporary female gothics—a persecuted heroine trapped in a house diffused with manic oedipal anxieties and assaulted by the forces of socio-economic power (often disguised as religion) run amok. The fears that haunt Radcliffe's heroines are as real as they are ephemeral; that is, the author manages to create a fictional world where disinheritance is troped as the equivalent of incestuous rape. And if neither threat actually materializes, the reader vicariously experiences both as if they did through the vivid imaginative fantasies of each of the heroines. As her heroines flee from towers to labyrinthine catacombs to rooms with trick locks, they seem to be running in quick sand. The strange stasis—the slow-motion and then sudden flurry, the revolving cycles of inertia and mania—all are characteristics of the long-winded, hysterical prose of the female gothic. But such devices merely encode and proffer the dominant ideology that lies at the heart of the genre, that lies at the heart of the heroines, that

lies at the heart of women in patriarchal society: the ideology I have come to recognize as "gothic feminism."

Radcliffe's later novels actually fictionalize the major claims presented by Mary Wollstonecraft's *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* (1792), for if Wollstonecraft condemns the inadequate educations women receive, Radcliffe demonstrates the disastrous effects of such training in her gothic anti-heroines. But it is in the creation of what I have come to recognize as gothic feminism that Wollstonecraft and Radcliffe have the most in common. Both authors conspired (albeit unknowingly) in creating this potent ideology that persists today in myriad forms and undergirds many of the assumptions of what now goes under the name of "victim feminism," the contemporary anti-feminist notion that women earn their superior social and moral rights in society by positioning themselves as innocent victims of a corrupt tyrant and an oppressive patriarchal society.

At this point, however, one realizes that one has once again succumbed to generalizing about the genre, lapsing into that old critical trap—the generic laundry list. The gothic has always lured its critics into that quagmire and managed to elude systematic analysis as a result. The challenge in writing about the female gothic, then, lies initially in defining one's terms. And, unfortunately, analysis of the "gothic" has traditionally been accomplished through what Eugenia DeLamotte has called "the shopping-list approach." Listing devices or conventions as the 1801 *Monthly* did ("unnatural parents, — persecuted lovers, — murders, — haunted apartments, — winding sheets, and winding stair-cases, — subterraneous passages, — lamps that are dim and perverse, and that always go out when they should not, — monasteries, — caves, — monks, tall, thin, and withered, with lank abstemious cheeks, — dreams, — groans, — and spectres") was standard in the critical discourse through the 1960s. But during the past three decades literary critics have turned their attention to defining the genre by addressing questions about the "meaning of the Gothic myth."[2] The female gothic most recently has been subjected to several useful and provocative interpretations; however, all of them privilege the notion of the "female" "self" in ways that ignore the highly ideological nature of both the gothic "myth" and their own critical analy-

ses. But by employing an approach that does not subscribe to the humanist ideology we can come, I think, to some new insights into the discourse systems that formed "gothic feminism."

In other words, I do not indulge the notion that women can ever escape their social, political, and economic conditions and create or preserve some sort of pristine a-historical "self." In a post-structuralist leap of faith, however, I do believe that we can come to some conclusions (albeit tentative) about the female gothic genre and its complicity with the development of "victim feminism" and "professional femininity" as ideologies. Discussions of the female gothic, like analyses of feminism, have, unfortunately, uncritically participated in the very fantasies that the genres have created for their unwary readers. We, like the characters in the novels or proponents of a monolithic feminism, want to find something hidden, mysterious, deep and esoteric behind the black veil, and usually this elusive deep structure is imaged as some sort of sexual or psychic secret. The lure of the gothic has been precisely in this quality, this notion that as readers we have creative or quasi-artistic power by investing empty signifiers with our own self-created meanings. As critics, however, we cannot afford to become participants in the readers' frenzy, caught up like the characters in the manic dance of the gothic.

The voices that emerge from the female gothic novel tradition—and the discourse-systems that emerge from them—have been traditionally recognized as the voices of Sensibility and the sentimental traditions, melodrama and the hyperbolic staging of female suffering and victimization, and finally what is known as gothic and vindication fiction. I would contend, however, that white, bourgeois women writers have not simply been the passive victims of male-created constructions, but rather that they have frequently depicted themselves, as men have, as manipulative, passive-aggressive, masochist, and sadistic. In short, they have created characters who masquerade as women caught up and struggling against the dynamics of the oppressive and controlling masculine *gaze*. Now we recognize these terms as standards ones taken from psychoanalytic ideologies, and I would identify my use of them as informed by my conviction that psychoanalysis has participated, as has literature, in the rather

broad cultural project of "diagnosing" and "curing" social and sexual weaknesses and deviancies that it has actually created.[3]

As early as 1769 Elizabeth Montagu's "Essay on the praeternatural beings in Shakespeare" revealed how quickly and thoroughly the gothic had been constructed, according to Harriet Guest, "as the site of a privatized and licensed dissipation" and an articulation of "a gender-specific utopian politics." For Guest, the gothic as constructed by women writers "facilitated the definition of national character in terms that were both wantonly heterogeneous in their embrace of private and diverse individuals, and redeemed in their idealization of chaste and maternal femininity, the sacred power of Britannia." Middle-class women writers of this period were particularly attracted to the female gothic novel because they could explore within its parameters their fantasized overthrow of the public realm, figured as a series of ideologically-constructed masculine "spaces," in favor of the creation of a new privatized, feminized world. As an example of a feminized discourse of political embourgeoisification, the female gothic participates in the paradoxical enterprise of both criminalizing and deifying women, and thus we are presented over and over again with the gothic anti-heroine and the dead/undead gothic mother. The persistence of both constructions suggests the need of women writers to expose and at the same time conceal the uneasy slippages that existed between apparently opposed concepts of women during this period: public and libidinal sexuality poised against private and unimpeachable chastity.[4] The valorization of the private, extrapolitical aspects of the female gothic novel suggests that women writers conspired with their culture to position women securely within the home, propping up the edifice of the patriarchal family, and insuring its continuance through the fetishization of virginity and marital chastity. But at the same time (melo)dramatic and hyperbolic eruptions continue to be depicted in these fictions—wanton sexuality, adultery, murder, and mayhem—all of which figure a political import that is subversive or ambivalent at the very least.

The female gothic was understood pre-1970 as primarily a psychological fiction exploring the fears and guilt attendant on sexual maturation, but these works can more accurately be read as elided representations of

the political, socio-economic, and historical complexities of women's lives under the capitalist system. That is, the female gothic became a coded system whereby women authors covertly communicated to other women—their largely female reading audience—their ambivalent rejection and at the same time outward complicity with the dominant sexual ideologies of their culture. Female authors ironically inverted the "separate spheres" ideology by valorizing the private female world of the home and fictively destroying the public/juridical masculine world. In other words, the female gothic novel reified the "separate spheres" ideology in such a way that women were no longer victimized by it, but fictively took control of it, but only up to a certain point. This point can be located at precisely the creation of what I am calling the professionalization or masquerade of femininity: women's supposedly passive acceptance of their newly-proscribed social and educational identities as wives and mothers of the bourgeoisie. The dominant issue was the professionalization, the institutionalization of bourgeois femininity, a code of conduct that spelled out a proper middle-class woman's behavior and responses to not simply her everyday routines, but her possible sojourn in a dank stone cavern in the heart of Sicily.

And whereas the ideology of the Eternal Feminine demanded female submission, economic disenfranchisement of women, and social conformity to their proscribed domestic roles, the female gothic depicted its young female heroines as anything but entrapped, passive, and docile. Or, to be more precise, the novels represent women who ostensibly appear to be conforming to their acceptable roles within the patriarchy, but who actually subvert the father's power at every possible occasion. I have come to recognize this ideology as gothic feminism, a species of a later phenomenon that was labelled "double consciousness" by W. E. B. DuBois and expanded upon by Ralph Ellison, both of whom revealed it as the root of black attitudes toward white hegemony. Although it may seem frivolous to compare the situations of black slaves to white middle-class women, the same enabling strategies and psychic defense mechanism was used by both groups to survive what each group experienced as alienation and objectification.[5]

Writing his *Commentaries on the Laws of England* in 1765, the jurist William Blackstone stated: "The husband and wife are one person in law; that is, the very being or legal existence of the woman is suspended during the marriage, or at least is incorporated and consolidated into that of the husband: under whose total protection and cover, she performs everything." The ideally "covered" woman of the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century—not unlike a slave—existed only in relation to her male master/husband. But such an identity, said the female gothic author and reader, was a legal and social construct that could be persistently attacked, deconstructed, and dissolved in the female gothic novel. The most common situation in all of these novels concerns an inheritance, a property, or an estate whose entail is in dispute. And although she has all of the considerable forces of the patriarchy aligned against her—you guessed it—our young, innocent, naive heroine manages to gain her rightful inheritance, usually by besting an evil uncle (read: displaced father-figure). And to make matters perfect, our heroine further triumphs over the patriarchy by creating an alternative companionate family, marrying a "feminized" man who promises, if not in word then through his sheer incompetence, to be completely malleable.

The female gothic constitutes what I would call a rival female-created fantasy—"gothic feminism"—a version of "victim feminism," an ideology of female power through pretended weakness. Such an ideology positions women as innocent victims who deserve to be rewarded with the ancestral estate because they were unjustly persecuted by the corrupt patriarch. If the heroines manage inadvertently to cause the deaths of these patriarchs, so much the better. Montoni and Schedoni, the hapless villains of *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) and *The Italian* (1797), both appear to self-destruct through their own misguided arrogance and egoism, but we know better. The gothic feminist always manages to dispose of her enemies without dirtying her dainty little hands. The position that Radcliffe and her followers advocated for other women to adopt throughout the female gothic novel was one of "wise passiveness" or what we might more cynically label passive-aggression.

In its convergence of psychological and socio-political issues the female gothic—from its inception during the Industrial and French Revo-

lutions through 1848—stands as a distinctive artistic form spawned in reaction to the sexual excesses depicted in the writings of the Marquis de Sade and the radical economic, social, and religious dislocations that occurred with the onset of industrialization and the triumph of a capitalist economy. Women for the first time had a chance to express themselves in widely disseminated and cheaply printed novels that became immensely popular with the new reading audience—largely middle-class women enclosed in the newly created and idealized bourgeois home. These women responded to their sudden change in status with an ambivalence that found its expression in one of the dominant ideologies of the female gothic: the fantasy that the weak have power through carefully cultivating the appearance of their very powerlessness. Such an ideology formed not only the message of the female gothic, but it also accounts for the novels' popularity among women readers who covertly wanted to believe that they could challenge or in some way passively subvert their newly inscribed and institutionalized "spaces," identities, and roles as the wives and mothers of the bourgeoisie.

If we consider the female gothic as a highly ideological signifying system, a discourse system, then we must recognize that we have labelled the genre a literary category only out of desperation, only because we do not know what else to call it. Unlike other neat period distinctions, the gothic is both peculiarly full and peculiarly empty at the same time. It cannot be approached through any narrow category of meaning that will explain its many permutations or manifestations. Trying to limit the genre to a particular time period (as Maurice Lévy has done), or trying to define it in terms of "conventions" (as Sedgwick does)—all of these are essentially futile attempts to give shape to the intrinsically shapeless.[6] I would claim instead that the only contours or parameters that can be applied successfully to the gothic are the codified "spaces" and "voices" that emerge from its own fragmented discourse-system. Stated in the simplest possible terms, the voices that emerge from the novels that traditionally have been identified as female gothic are concerned with delineating highly ideological struggles between "reality" (the forces of political power) and "desire" (the forces of libidinal energy). The nature of these struggles—sometimes seen as sexual or psychic, sometimes social,

economic, political, or religious—is less important than the fact that female characters are depicted as constantly struggling against powerful forces that they believe are real and that they believe are poised to destroy them. The enemy is not solely within, as is the case with the majority of gothics written by male authors. The real and ideological enemies for women—female gothic authors and readers—are without.[7] Such a distinction is crucial for understanding that there is a genre of novels written by women about females struggling against alien and powerful forces who resort for their own self-defense to using a battery of strategies—"gothic feminism"—that were drawn from the stock situations of popular stage melodramas and sentimental novels.

The typical female gothic novel presents a blameless female heroine triumphing through a variety of passive-aggressive strategies over a male-created system of oppression and corruption, also known as the protection racket we affectionately refer to as the patriarchy. The melodrama that suffuses these works is explicable only if we understand, as Paula Backscheider has recently demonstrated, that a generally hyperbolic Sentimentalism was saturating the literary ambience, informing the gothic melodramas that were such standard fare during the popular theater season. But melodrama, as Peter Brooks has demonstrated, is also characterized by a series of moves or postures that made it particularly attractive to women. Specifically, Brooks lists as crucial to melodrama the tendency toward depicting intense, excessive representations of life that tend to strip away the facade of manners to reveal the essential conflicts at work, leading to moments of intense and highly stylized confrontations. These symbolic dramatizations rely on what Brooks lists as the standard features of melodrama: hyperbolic figures, lurid and grandiose events, masked relationships and disguised identities, abductions, slow-acting poisons, secret societies, mysterious parentage, and other elements from the melodramatic repertory. In short, melodrama is a version of the female gothic and the female gothic provides the undergirding for feminism as a hyperbolic ideology bent on depicting women as the innocent victims of a corrupt and evil patriarchal system. But, as Laura Mulvey has observed, "ideological contradiction is the overt mainspring and specific content of melodrama, not a hidden, unconscious thread to be picked up

only by special critical process." The contradiction at the core of the female gothic, at the core of melodrama as a genre, would appear to be the woman's intense ambivalence toward the paternal home and, by extension, the patriarchy. The home as the site of patriarchally-based, rather than emotionally-based relationships, denies women the chance to exercise their subjectivity, and so their only means of rebelling is to escape, to run away from the paternal domicile. The nightmare in the female gothic novel is that women so frequently cannot run toward what they claim to desire, the man they want to marry. They run instead in a large circle that leads them back precisely to the paternal home, but this time the estate has been magically transformed into a maternally-marked abode through the efforts of the heroine's very circuitous journey. In short, the female gothic novel accomplishes the cultural work of fantasy for women; it convinces them that their safely-proscribed rebellion will result in an improved home for both their mothers and themselves. In rebelling against the patriarch they paradoxically reify the power of the home and family to which they will return, all the while justifying their acts of parricide and class warfare by positioning themselves as innocent victims.

According to Brooks, the gothic novel can be most clearly understood as standing in reaction to desacralization and the pretensions of rationalism. Like melodrama, the female gothic represents both the urge toward resacralization and the impossibility of conceiving sacralization other than in personal terms. For the Enlightenment mentality there is no longer a clear transcendent value to which one can be reconciled. There is, rather, a social order to be purged, a set of ethical imperatives to be made clear.[8] And who better equipped to purge the new bourgeois world of all traces of aristocratic corruption than the gothic heroine? Such a woman—professionally feminine, virginal, innocent, and good—assumed virtually religious significance because within the discourse system so much was at stake. Making the world safe for the middle class was the goal inscribed in both female gothic texts and late eighteenth-century bourgeois feminism. But such a task was not without its perils. What I am calling gothic feminism was born when women realized that they had a formidable external enemy—the ravening, lust-

ful, greedy patriarch—in addition to their own worst internal enemy, their consciousness of their sexual difference perceived as weakness rather than strength.

Consider, for instance, the typical gothic husband. In "The Sicilian Romance, or The Apparition of the Cliff," Henry Siddons's 1794 adaptation of Radcliffe's second novel, the frustrated patriarch chains his rejected wife to a stone wall in a cave and feeds her the way one cares for a forsaken pet that refuses to die. We might legitimately ask, what sort of action is required from women to protect and defend themselves against such evil tyranny? Over and over again, the female gothic writer proffers professional femininity—a highly codified form of conduct, a masquerade—as the only force strong enough to tame the ravages of a lustful, raving patriarch gone berserk.

We have arrived—paradoxically as it may seem—at Luce Irigaray's notion of the "feminine feminine" as opposed to the "masculine feminine" woman. According to Irigaray's revision of Lacan, young girls never successfully resolve the Oedipal phase and instead lag behind in the Imaginary realm, a sort of prison-house of illusory images and childhood landscapes. But instead of viewing this entrapment in the nursery drama as completely negative, Irigaray argues that it opens up possibilities for women that men cannot begin to appreciate or experience. Rather than listening only to what men or patriarchal discourse tells women about their sexuality or their fantasy lives, that is, rather than continuing to be "masculine feminine" women, they need to create themselves instead as "feminine feminine." This latter sort of woman has learned to "mime the mime," mimic and thereby explode the gendered constructions that the patriarchy has invented and codified to enslave and dehumanize her. But central to the notion of mimicry for Irigaray is the technique of masquerade, an attempt to play the gender game as if one were in the know, self-consciously, self-referentially, almost mockingly deflating the very role one would appear to be assuming. For Irigaray:

> There is, in an initial phase, perhaps only one "path," the one historically assigned to the feminine: that of *mimicry*. One must assume the feminine role deliberately. Which means already to convert a form of subordination into an affirmation, and thus to begin to thwart it. . . . To

> play with mimesis is thus, for a woman, to try to recover the place of her exploitation by discourse, without allowing herself to be simply reduced to it. It means to resubmit herself—inasmuch as she is on the side of the "perceptible," of "matter"—to "ideas," in particular to ideas about herself, that are elaborated in/by a masculine logic, but so as to make "visible," by an effort of playful repetition, what was supposed to remain invisible: the cover-up of a possible operation of the feminine in language.

For Irigaray, only when women can bring themselves to a new and unmediated position of selfhood, subjectivity, and language—apart from the patriarchy—will they be able to become a "feminine feminine" woman, that is, defined by woman-marked codes, values, and beliefs.

Irigaray's notions of mimicry and masquerade, however, are most suggestive for the female gothic's discourse network. She argues that women can best battle the patriarchy when they mime the mimes that men have imposed on them. If men have positioned women as simply mirrors for a grandiose masculine imaginary, then women can break through that specular appropriation only when they reflect back to men these same images in grotesque, immense proportions. In other words, women can undo the effects of male discourse only when they act out, overdo, and hyperbolize those same codes. To break out of the masculine imaginary that went under the name of the gothic required a new discourse system, the hyperbolic female gothic, a miming of the mime, a mimicry of the gigantic mirror we call Enlightenment or Sensibility culture.

In an analogous manner, Hélène Cixous has observed: "men and women are caught in a network of millennial cultural determinations of a complexity that is practically unanalyzable: we can no more talk about 'woman' than about 'man' without being caught within an ideological theater where the multiplication of representations, images, reflections, myths, identifications constantly transforms, deforms, alters each person's imaginary order and in advance, renders all conceptualization null and void."[9] The female gothic novel captures this sense of living within a series of interlocking and stifling "networks," each of which demanded a certain psychic and linguistic code—the codes we now recognize as

psychoanalytic discourse. And in an attempt to control these networks the female gothic heroine resorted to what we would diagnose as "the talking cure"; that is, she attempted to talk herself out of her perception of life as prison, confessional, asylum, maze, or circus. Her talking cure, the "embodied voice" that emerges from the novels, can finally be identified as what Kristeva has labelled "purposely perverse hysteria." And the texts that demonstrate the effectiveness of her "talking cure," that embody the hysteria, are the documents the authors call "novels" or "romances."

When the Marquis de Sade first indulged his eccentric tastes for the whip, he created not simply the phenomenon we have labelled in his honor—sadism—he also reified its opposite—masochism. Now sadism and masochism existed before the Marquis so kindly brought them into relief; masochism certainly existed long before Leopold von Sacher-Masoch (1836-1895) described it in his novels. Moreover, masochism has the dubious distinction of being one of the few characteristics consistently identified by Freud (and his female disciples) as clearly associated with women. Any analysis of the female gothic novel, unfortunately, has to confront the mystique of female masochism. Feminist literary critics would like to reject any notion of women as inherently masochistic, indeed, as inherently prone to any essentialist quality. But more germane to our discussion is the need to recognize the female author's careful manipulation of the masochistic pose. That is, the gothic heroine indulges in what we would recognize as masochistic gestures for effect. But more important for the female gothic novel, what we call masochism became a stock characteristic of the situation for the gothic heroine. These young women not only tolerate all manner of abuse; they actually seem to seek it out.[10] If an event or situation is comfortable, count on the gothic heroine to pursue trouble.

Consider Emily in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*. A virtual prisoner in a desolate Italian castle, Emily finds herself pursued by not one but two potential rapists. Does she stay sensibly in her room at night? Of course not, she is too busy trying to locate her tortured and starving aunt, imprisoned in another tower of the castle. When Emily does find herself in Montoni's chambers, threatened with marriage to the odious and chubby

Morano, we are supposed to believe that this evil has just descended on our unsuspecting heroine, unprovoked. Such a perception is cultivated by the author in order to conceal the fact that masochism, the deliberate seeking out of pain as pleasure, stands as one of the primary devices in the gothic heroine's arsenal of passive-aggressive strategies. By presenting herself as an innocent and suffering victim, the gothic heroine actually positions herself for the assault, shielded, of course, from the charge or even the impression that she is the aggressor. Playing the victim often simply conceals the fact that one is a victimizer: we are once again within the territory of miming the mime. The women who populate female gothic novels clearly and unequivocally triumph in the end—morally and financially—but generally they have caused a good deal of havoc in the process. And do we condemn these heroines? Never. They have managed to win their readers' sympathies through conforming to the carefully delineated construction of innocent victim, what I am calling the professionalization of femininity, or the cultivated pose of femininity. Do Emily and Ellena just happen to triumph over all their enemies? Radcliffe would have us believe that they managed these feats by doing nothing much at all. Passivity, it would seem, or lying in wait for the oppressor to self-destruct, is its own reward.

All of this brings us to Freud's seminal essay "A Child is Being Beaten" (SE XVII: 175-204; 1919), a source for much recent speculation on the contours of the female gothic novelistic tradition. These novels actually encode in almost uncanny precision the three versions of the beating fantasy as Freud has delineated them. For a girl the first and the third psychological positions in the beating fantasy are sadistic and voyeuristic—another child is being beaten and I am witnessing it—while the second position in the fantasy is masochistic, erotic, and repressed—I am the child being beaten by my father. For the boy the psychic transformation is less complex due to the elimination of one stage. For him the first fantasy, "I am loved by my father," becomes the conscious fantasy, "I am being beaten by my mother." According to Freud, both male and female subjects appear to shift continually between these three (or two) positions largely through the conscious and unconscious permutations of incestuous desire for the father and its repression. The struggles we see

in Radcliffe's novels, for instance, between her heroines and various other women who actually take the beatings from a variety of father-substitutes suggests the compulsions at work here. The gothic feminist is a deeply conflicted subject who fends off the blows and manages to watch voyeuristically other women get punished for her projected crimes. Consider, for instance, Jane Eyre who watches Bertha beat and get beaten. Or consider (Miss) Victor Frankenstein, who watches every other child in "his" family get "beaten," that is, killed. The beatings that suffuse these novels suggest the ambivalent construction of gender that lies beneath the surface pose of complicity and passivity. Gothic feminists are angry, while their heroines are pointedly controlled and strategically not angry. These heroines are characterized—unlike their creators—by repression and silence, acceptance or at least the pose of complaisancy. The heroines are professionally feminine, while the anger of the authors can be seen in the violence that happens to plague anyone foolish enough to stand in her heroine's way.

Now this outline of just one of the stock strategies of the gothic heroine presupposes a certain psychological and social matrix, a cash/sex nexus, an interrelation between desire and reality that produces ideology. It is necessary, however, to further situate my approach to the female gothic within the methods outlined by the theorists who have grounded any discussions of sexuality and historicity in the nineteenth century. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari in *Anti-Oedipus* and *A Thousand Plateaus*, volumes one and two of their *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1972), maintain that society is invested by desire and is the historically determined product of desire, so that libido has no need of any mediation, sublimation, or transformation, in order to invade and invest the relations of production. Desire creates reality and is solely defined by historical process. Ideology is the attempt to shape desire, and the two types of shaping are radically distinguished from one another. Individual fantasy and group fantasy, fantasy as "speaking playing" and fantasy as "daydream," arise from the need to shape desire. In the latter, analogous to the construction of female gothic novels, the fantasizer experiences institutions themselves as mortal because they can be changed according to the articulations of social desire through making the death instinct into

institutional creativity. Commenting on this pattern, John Brenkman argues that within a capitalist system, "it is reification, the transformation of the exchanging of human activity into a set of calculable relations between things, that reconstitutes the subject as a separated individual, that converts play into the interiorized fantasies of the ego, that binds the death drive to eros and makes self-preservation an act of aggression."[11] And, we might add, no one is more adept at self-preservation and its concomitant acts of aggression than the gothic heroine.

And although they think they are revising Freud, Deleuze and Guattari are actually only paraphrasing him when they assert that the only escapes from the spiral of desire/energy/reality/ideology are repression or death, because desire desires death. In order to escape the wheels of the capitalist body-politic, the female gothic novelist and her female reader fantasize a reality that culminates in either repression or death. If the novelist employs repression, then we know ourselves to be reading a work in the realm of the "melodramatically comic" female gothic; if she images death as the only escape, then we know ourselves to be reading a work in the "melodramatically tragic" female gothic tradition. In a world that has been radically desacralized, the tragic is no longer possible, hence the invention of melodrama, the dilution of tragedy in a flurry of emotions signifying little. Radcliffe's novels, Austen's *Northanger Abbey*, or *Jane Eyre* stand as archetypal exemplars of what we might call the "melodramatically comic" female gothic, spawning such modern descendants as du Maurier's *Rebecca*, Margaret Atwood's *Lady Oracle*, Angela Carter's *Nights at the Circus*, and Iris Murdoch's "gothic trilogy" (*The Italian Girl*, *The Time of the Angels*, and *A Severed Head*). In contrast, Wollstonecraft's novels, Shelley's *Mathilda* and *Frankenstein*, *Wuthering Heights*, "The Yellow Wallpaper," Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*, or the more recent work of Muriel Spark (*Not to Disturb*, *The Driver's Seat*) and Joyce Carol Oates (*Mysteries of Winterthurn*, *Bellefleur*, and *A Bloodsmoor Romance*) represent what I would call the melodramatically tragic strain in the female gothic.

Central to what I am labelling the comic pattern is the ideological construction of a bucolic family, a sort of static paradise like Radcliffe's *La Vallée* or *Jane Eyre*'s Ferndean, a locus that cannot be described be-

cause it can be imagined only in the vaguest terms. Such a static ideal conforms to and, in fact, endorses the ideology of white, middle-class womanhood prevalent in Europe and the United States for the past two centuries. The female economy operating in the "comic" work valorizes the heterosexual compulsion, presenting the sexes as finally complementary rather than oppositional. On the other hand, the female economy operating in the tragic female gothic denies the viability of heterosexuality, exploding the work through the imagery of gendered warfare.

In order to understand the issues at stake in this dialectic, it is necessary to look briefly at writings by women about sexual difference. From the late eighteenth-century writings of Mary Wollstonecraft to the work of contemporary theorists like Nancy Chodorow and Carol Gilligan, female writers have participated in defining the nature of women as "Other" to men. For Wollstonecraft, women's minds were essentially identical to men's, but these minds became more emotional, less reasonable, more prone to excess through the corrupting influences of patriarchal education. And so what was the solution according to Wollstonecraft? She advised that women would be wise to bury their emotions, become, that is, reasonable "honorary men." Such a position, unfortunately, merely reinforced "feminist humanism" and the domestic ideology, the marginalization of women in the home. By valorizing the autonomous subjectivity of the inner life, Wollstonecraft—despite her overt advocacy of economic independence and rational self-fulfillment for women—ironically ended up advocating a sort of imprisonment for the domiciled woman. In a similar manner, Chodorow and Gilligan, presenting themselves as writing within one tradition of contemporary feminism—white, Western, and middle-class—codify a view of women that valorizes similar essentialist qualities (Gilligan: women subscribe to "an ethic of care") that tends to infantilize or trivialize women. Both assert that the maturation process for women in Western culture stands in direct opposition to the process for men. Woman's identity supposedly is rooted not in the realities of psychic separation, but in resigned acceptance of her inherent-teleological destiny as a woman. Both women further call for a transvaluation of values in which qualities that have been regarded as "womanly" and therefore inferior are recognized as superior

by the society as a whole.[12] Such ideologies, created by women presumably for female consumption, stand in direct contrast to the angrier, more subversive voices that emerge from the female gothic novel. These voices present the two sides of women's attitudes toward the heterosexual compulsion. On one hand, a woman can accept and survive; on the other hand, she can rage and self-destruct.

But just to be certain that we do not miss the tragedy implicit in the gothic heroine's attempts to reshape what she thinks is her only "reality," she demands, "Kill me." Such a request would be viewed as strange in any other genre than the female gothic, but this imperative constitutes the climax of Muriel Spark's *Driver's Seat* (1970). And in order that her murderer makes no mistake about her intentions, the heroine repeats her demand in four languages and hands him the knife. Handing the murderer the knife and marking the spot—such gestures expose the desperation, the futility, the impossibility of ever escaping from the madness these women recognize as life in the "melodramatically tragic" female gothic novel. But the heroine's evident masochism actually masks a much deeper social malady. Her need is motivated by a desire to destroy not simply herself, but the very social and economic structures that have created the conditions that have led to her desperation. But if the gothic heroine cannot destroy the patriarchy, she can attempt to outsmart it; she can mime it to death. Positioning herself as the deserving and innocent victim of oppression, malice, and fraud, the gothic heroine exchanges her suffering for money and a man, a means of financial support and security. In the melodramatic scheme of things, a victim is always rewarded because Justice always prevails and suffering (particularly if one is young and pretty) becomes a kind of lucre to be exchanged in the strange barter system that women understood (or misunderstood) as the "shadow labor" of gendered capitalism.[13]

The gothic heroine's status as a reified object, a commodity, reifies her economic and social status in a capitalist signifying system that requires her identity as both a use-value and an exchange-value. If the gothic heroine cannot reform the economic system, she has the option of fictionally transforming her role and complicity in it or escaping it altogether through death. The ultimate ideologies to appear in the female

gothic novel concern the heroine's ability to destroy and reconstitute the corrupt institutions that hold her and all the male characters in the novel in thrall. In the place of these public spaces the heroine creates a new private domain that valorizes female-constructed fantasies: the companionate family, an idealized locus of pastoral values, the antithesis of the patriarchal bourgeois family that has subjected the heroine to such indignities throughout the novel. And make no mistake: this world is extremely hazy about genital sexuality, about women accepting their roles and destinies as mothers, as the producers of future owners and workers. Further, if the heroine cannot accomplish the formidable task of reforming the family, cannot cast herself as the triumphant Culture Hero(ine), she vows to die in the process.

But in order to discuss the female gothic novelist's impulse to civilize the family and by extension capitalistic society, and to create an alternative fantasy-body, let us briefly examine two works that attempt to explain the invention of the "civilizing process" that bourgeois women, of necessity, experienced: Norbert Elias's *The History of Manners* and Michel Bakhtin's *Rabelais and His World*. Elias's work traces the creation of what he calls *homo clausus* during the eighteenth century, an individual who will make total biological control of himself a private matter. Such an individual experiences the culturally-imposed "rising threshold of shame and embarrassment" about bodily functions as an endorsement of increasing personal restraint, as the institution of "a wall, of something 'inside' man separating him from the outside world" (259). And it was, according to Elias, the newly-created and controlled "public body" that was given validation by society. This "public body" distinguished itself from the lower social classes by its aping of the courtly value of self-control, along with its acceptance of shame as the secret sin at its (bourgeois) heart. What Elias calls "manners"—highly gendered customs, behavior, and fashions—now were diffused from the court to the upper class, and then to the next class down the social ladder until all classes were ultimately affected by the codes of conduct that were being advocated in the books of courtly behavior that were now saturating the newly literate population. According to Elias, it was through the imposition of such "manners" and the use of shame as a disciplinary tool that the modern

state could come into existence. Civilizing the urban space meant that education and recreational activities were now controlled by moral censorship, while the new sensibilities made physical violence, duelling, hunting, and public displays of bodily functions all abhorrent behaviors (126-29).

Bakhtin, on the other hand, privileges the "carnivalesque" body of the early modern period. This body enacts its essentially anti-bourgeois values through intense releases of emotion, destroys authoritarian strictures, and challenges and inverts imposed political and religious systems. The lower classes, of course, are freest to indulge in such *charivari*, or communal dances, while the obverse of such "harmless" activity would be the carnage and mob violence of the French Revolution. The struggle between these two bodies—*homo clausus* and the carnivalesque—can be seen as one locus of meaning in the female gothic novel, although ironically the carnivalesque possibility is generally associated in these works not with lower-class women but with aristocratic practitioners of adultery, gossip, slander, and duelling or poisoning as a way of settling one's scores. A woman like Radcliffe's Emily is advised alternately by her father to conform, to conceal, to privatize, while on the other hand the carnivalesque possibility is always open to them, luring her into the history of the rampaging bacchai Signora Laurentini, aka Sister Agnes. These two bodies, and the warfare between them, characterizes the shifting personae of all of the polarized women in Radcliffe's novels, as well as the two Catherines in *Wuthering Heights* or the struggle between the bodies of Jane and Bertha in *Jane Eyre* or Victoria and Lilla in Dacre's *Zofloya*.

The middle-class founded its status—its economic and political power—on the body of the *homo clausus*, the retentive, controlled, concealed body. And such a body was usually coded as male and gained power through its ability to distance others, to refuse engagement, to mimic the scientific values of objectivity and rationality. The female body, on the other hand, was associated in this formula with diffuse energy, subjectivity, and emotionality. As Gary Kelly has shrewdly observed, the construction of both the sentimental and the reasonable woman during the late eighteenth century was part of a larger ideological project, the cre-

ation of a professional middle-class discourse system that would supplant the aristocracy at the same time it gained control over the lower classes. "Woman" in this cultural enterprise was crucial as a pawn in the issues of property, children, and inheritance; and finally she constituted a certain technology of the self that we now recognize as "virtue" and "reason."[14]

The female gothic, in other words, assisted in the bourgeois cultural revolution by helping to professionalize gender, by collaborating in the construction of the professionally middle-class woman and the professionally bourgeois pater familias. Women who did not conform to appropriately-coded bourgeois norms—who reminded the reading audience of long discarded and disgraced aristocratic flaws like adultery, passion, gossip, slander, and physical violence—became themselves the targets of savage beatings throughout the works. Men who are coded as aristocratic, like Rochester in *Jane Eyre* or Valancourt in *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, are allowed to survive only after they have subjected to a vicious beating and thereafter effectively renounce their flawed and anachronistic aristocratic tendencies.

There is no doubt that the body that emerges from female gothic textuality is a highly gendered one, the product of that greatest of dualism machines, capitalism. And the writing that emerges from such a machine is gender-specific, characterized by the female author's contradictory desire to both outwardly conform and at the same time to subvert, that is, to be both a body and a machine at odds with itself. In *A Room of One's Own* Virginia Woolf wonders why women increasingly turned to writing novels during the early nineteenth century, leaving poetry a male-dominated preserve, a bastion of masculine privilege. She proposes some fairly straightforward answers, such as the fact that novels emphasize character and event and can be written with less concentration than can poetry, which requires of its composer a higher degree of attention to details in order to ensure the poem's internal coherence. But then Woolf goes on to talk about the deadliness of either manly and womanly styles of writing, and such a notion, seemingly so liberal, fails to account for the inescapability of ideological constructions of gender, not to mention the historical conditions that determined women's complicity and

participation in both accepting and overthrowing those historical realities. If the chaos that characterized France from the pre- through the post-Revolutionary period was not to pollute British society, then female writers had to be enlisted in the attempt to spread an ideology that curtailed the spread of such dangerous notions as equality, fraternity, liberty. The marketplace demanded a gendered society in order to protect the very existence of an economy that privileged the middle- and upper-classes. Major eighteenth- and nineteenth-century female novelists like Radcliffe, Austen, Mary Shelley, and the Brontës all exploited in their fiction the appearance of their compliance with traditional female domestic values. But we should not confuse such a facade with their elided purposes. The female gothic novelist attempted nothing less than a redefinition of sexuality and power in a gendered, patriarchal society; she fictively reshaped the family, deconstructing both patrimonialism (inheritance through the male) and patrilineality (naming practices) in the process.[15] In short, she invented her own peculiar form of feminism. And in challenging both codes of masculine privilege she possessed her rightful fictional birthright: access to the untrammeled desire and energy to re-shape her version of "reality"; in the female gothic novel she creates what she thinks are alternative, empowering female-created fantasies. In her triumphant act of self-creation she rejects her subjugation and status as "other"—whether object or absence. She refuses, that is, to subscribe passively to confining male-created ideologies of the "woman as subject." She proffers instead "victim feminism" as a female-created ideology, mixing one part hyperbolic melodrama with one part Christian sentimentalism, and creating a heady brew that promised its readers the ultimate fantasy: their socially and economically weak position could actually be the basis of their strength. The meek shall inherit the gothic earth because they deserve to; evil is always destroyed because it deserves to be.

The buried reality that lies not very far below the surface of the female gothic is the sense that middle-class women can only experience the male-identified patriarchal home as either a prison or an asylum. A woman would be reduced in such a home to the status of an object, decorative or functional depending on one's husband's class. Life in such a home and the identity it conferred on a woman constitutes the night-

mare at the core of the female gothic novel and victim feminism. But the home that is created by Emily and Valancourt at the conclusion of *The Mysteries of Udolpho*, for instance, is not a patriarchally-marked home. Valancourt would appear to be living at *La Vallée* on an extremely tenuous basis, having been perceived by Emily and her friends as damaged goods after his disastrous foray in Paris. Acceptably tamed gothic husbands exist on very short leashes, and it is Emily and her sister-heroines who hold the power in these new households. Having traced the ravaging patriarch out of existence, the gothic feminist lives in her new domicile with her ritualistically wounded husband, a quasi-sibling who, like her, has barely survived his brush with the oppressor and emerged chastened and appropriately and professionally gendered. When critics puzzle over the final castrated status of Rochester, blinded in one eye and missing one hand, they reveal that they do not appreciate the long heritage of wounded and feminized gothic heroes that foregrounds Rochester's history. Consider, for instance, the two gunshot wounds Valancourt received, one of them delivered by his beloved's father, the mild St. Aubert. Beating fantasies emerge in the very real wounds that every gothic hero is forced to endure in the female gothic canon, and it is tempting to explain these stabbings or worse, as Bruno Bettelheim has, as "symbolic wounds." But gothic heroes all endure very real beatings and wounds, not merely symbolic ones, and in the receiving of these wounds it is as if they have earned the right to overthrow their fathers and establish a new companionate family and a redeemed class—a bourgeoisie that has learned to tame its excesses and perfectly balance reason and the emotions. I would contend that gothic feminism participates, as do Sentimentality and Romanticism as intellectual movements, in the broad cultural project of Enlightenment ideology—that is, making the world a safe place for feminized men and masculinized women. Foucault has charted his version of this cultural shift, claiming that it was exploitation rather than repression that characterized the prevailing attitude of the upper classes since the late eighteenth century:

> The new procedures of power that were devised during the classical age and employed in the nineteenth century were what caused our societies to go from *a symbolics of blood* to *an analysis of sexuality*. Clearly, noth-

> ing was more on the side of the law, death, transgression, the symbolic, and sovereignty than blood; just as sexuality was on the side of the norm, knowledge, life, meaning, the disciplines, and regulations.[16]

For Foucault, the bourgeoisie distinguished itself from both the aristocracy and the working class by making its sexuality and its health a primary source of its hegemony. Whereas "blood" was the source of the aristocracy's power, "sex" and its control and regulation became the predominant characteristic of the middle class, both men and women. According to Foucault, it was Sade and the first eugenists who advanced the transition from "sanguinity" to "sexuality." But Foucault fails to reckon with the female gothic novelists, whose works chart in increasingly graphic detail this very shift from status and class based on blood claims to the superior form of class, the regulation and control of one's sexuality, one's body. When Bertha Mason jumps from the roof of Thornfield we know that we are witnessing an important event in cultural history. In her mad act of suttee Bertha effectively extinguishes privileges based on blood claims and effectively makes way for her rival, the perfectly controlled and professionally feminine Jane Eyre.

Traditionally, critics have claimed that the hermeneutic implex of the female gothic novel is the question, "what does this mean?" As Barthes notes we continue to read a text because we have bought into its "enigmatic code," that is, we are engaged in trying to decipher those parts of the text that are still unresolved for us as readers.[17] But it is fair to say that the lure in the gothic is that the characters experience an "enigmatic code" that becomes mirrored by our reading process. For the female gothic heroine that "enigmatic code" generally clusters around the question of properly gendered behavior, power/property, and the relation of both to sexuality. But it is also important to recognize that the heroines are engaged less in an interpretive struggle than in a gendered and ideological one. What is at stake here is the war between "masculine" and "feminine" ways of shaping desire/bodies, of containing energy, of controlling ideology. When the gothic heroine creates her own self-serving ideology of the companionate family, then she is ready to reject those juridically-created systems, the prison or the asylum, that have ensnared her throughout the novel.

The gothic heroine's goal throughout most of the text is to ascertain the "secret" that the patriarchy has managed to keep from her, either through an elaborate system of walls and locked rooms (the prison and the asylum) or through the power of language to dissemble, to reveal and conceal at the same time (missing marriage licenses or wills). The gothic heroine spends most of the text cultivating the posture of passive-aggression through the two extremes available to her: hiding in a room/silence/repression of her emotions and her body, or moving through space in a sort of manic dance/hysterically acting out her assault on the patriarchy. But if woman finally is to be embodied in the female gothic text as anything other than passive or aggressive, she must create a social reality beyond merely internalizing the prison, the asylum, the confessional; she must redeem those institutions and mark them as "female" controlled and "female" identified. And so each of the male juridical institutions is taken into, incorporated, swallowed up and reconstituted by the heroine as the newly-created female-defined institution.

In commenting on the nature of revolutions in this period, "or perhaps in any period," Ronald Paulson has noted that there are two basic interpretations of the phenomenon: oedipal and oral-anal. As he notes, in the oedipal version the son kills, eats, and internalizes the father, "becoming himself the authority figure, producing a rational sequence of events, although a sequence that might be regarded unsympathetically as prerational," but in which the "effect is sublime or a progression from sublime to beautiful." In the other category, the oral-anal, the revolution is figured as a "regression to earlier stages of being, an ingestion that produces narcissism rather than internalized paternal authority," a sort of descent into the "grotesque, moving toward the undifferentiation of tyrant and oppressed."[18] The female gothic novel clearly exists as a species of cultural group fantasy work that finds its representation and symbolization in repeated dreams of parricide, seduction, and castration. The female gothic heroine, however, ambivalently rewrites the oedipal revolution by positioning herself as the dutiful daughter reluctantly forced to kill her father, while at the same time she is compelled to swallow and ingest the patriarch's institutions so that they can be reformed in a manner acceptable to her and her newly-validated mother.

In her triumphant overthrow of the patriarchy most gothic feminists finally do battle with that ultimate patriarchal family—institutionalized Christianity. The female gothic heroine usually becomes a heroine after she confronts, outwits, and destroys a terrifically corrupt monk or priest. I am thinking here not simply of Jane Eyre's rather tame duel with St. John Rivers, but of the ferocious struggle against Schedoni that occupied both Ellena and her beloved throughout the entire text of *The Italian*. In finally destroying Schedoni and his evil accomplice, Vivaldi's aristocratic mother, Ellena redeems not only her inheritance, her economy, her world, she also creates a home and companionate family that installs her (and her long-lost mother) as female quasi-deities. She invents, that is, the middle-class family.

The female gothic protagonist as cultural heroine has triumphed precisely because she has brought to birth a new class—the bourgeoisie—shorn of the excesses that characterized the aristocracy that made it unfit to preside over a newly industrialized society. But in destroying and supplanting the aristocracy, the gothic feminist accomplishes nothing less than the resacralization of her world. She excavates the buried body of her real or metaphorical mother, and by doing so she reinstates a fictionalized feminist fantasy: the matriarchy. In redeeming her mother, as Ellena does or as Emily manages to do for her long-murdered aunt in *The Mysteries of Udolpho* or as Julia does for the long-imprisoned mother in *A Sicilian Romance*, the gothic heroine reasserts her inheritance in a long-lost female tradition. This act is represented by the rediscovery and magical reanimation of the mother's supposedly dead body. Further, these novels posit the end of the discourse as located in the rediscovery of a sort of female-coded epistemology embodied in the stories that these women tell each other, the lost narratives about mad nuns and bleeding mothers. The biological heritage of suffering and wounded women is transformed through this ideology into a saga of heroic triumph; the gothic feminist text tells us that the world is reborn and purified through the mother's—not the son's—blood. Gothic feminist heroines discover their own bodies and voices only after they redeem their mothers, and they speak in a voice that some contemporary feminists have come to recognize as "victim feminism." But that voice is considerably more

complex than has previously been recognized, largely, I would claim, because its origins in gothic and melodramatic texts have not been recognized or studied.

As Elizabeth Bronfen has argued in *Over Her Dead Body: Death, Femininity and the Aesthetic*, psychoanalysis has consistently attempted to foreground the role and importance of the father in the construction of the ego because of an unacknowledged need to root out, displace and marginalize the mother. But the displacement of the mother from both Freud's and Lacan's accounts of ego formation simultaneously aestheticizes the woman's body as an object of death at the same time it charges it with intense and diffuse anxiety.[19] And strange as it may seem, the same sort of "fort-da" game described by Freud in *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* is played out repetitiously in the female gothic. The female gothic author keeps disposing of the mother, only to reel her body magically back into the text for obsessive view over and over again, revealing that within both psychoanalysis and the female gothic tradition the same wound, the same psychic trauma is being fingered. That wound consists, I think, in the loss of the matriarchy, the loss of the mother as a figure of power or even a fantasy of power in a society that values her role and importance. The sons of psychoanalysis and the daughters of the gothic both mourn the passing of the mother's body from view and control, and so they construct over and over again texts that symbolize their fantasized construction and reconstruction of the maternal, aesthetically potent and deadly beautiful body. Somehow the two movements—psychoanalysis and the gothic—find themselves spiralling into and around yet another attempt to salvage the mother's body and by extension her control and power over society—the late eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century ideology that now goes under the name of "feminism."

Notes

1. Rumors about Radcliffe's sanity began during her own lifetime, and her earliest biographer expended a fair amount of energy trying to disprove the medical

fact that Radcliffe dies of a brain fever. See T. N. Talfourd, "Memoir" to *Gaston de Blondeville* (London, 1826), as well as Clara McIntyre, *Ann R adcliffe* (New Haven: Yale, 1920), and E. B. Murray, *Ann Radcliffe* (New York: Twayne, 1972).

2. See DeLamotte, *Perils of the Night*, 5. The major pre-1960 critics of the gothic include Edith Birkhead, *The Tale of Terror: A Study of the Gothic Romance* (London: Constable, 1921); Eino Railo, *The Haunted Castle: A Study of the Elements of English Romanticism* (1927; rpt. New York: Humanities Press, 1964); J. M. S. Tompkins, *The Popular Novel in England, 1770-1800* (1932; rpt. Westport: Greenwood Press, 1961); Montague Summers, *The Gothic Quest: A History of the Gothic Novel* (1938; rpt. New York: Russell and Russell, 1964); Devendra P. Varma, *The Gothic Flame, Being a History of the Gothic Novel in England: Its Origins, Efflorescence, Disintegration, and Residuary Influences* (1957; rpt. New York: Russell and Russell, 1966); the major post-1960 approaches include Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick, *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions* (New York: Arno, 1980), and "The Character in the Veil: Imagery of the Surface in the Gothic Novel," *PMLA* 96 (1981), 255-70; William Patrick Day, *In the Circles of Fear and Desire: A Study of Gothic Fantasy* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1985); George E. Haggerty, *Gothic Fiction/Gothic Form* (University Park: Penn State P, 1989); Coral Ann Howells, *Love, Mystery, and Misery* (London: Athlone, 1978); Elizabeth MacAndrew, *The Gothic Tradition in Fiction* (New York: Columbia UP, 1979); David Punter, *The Literature of Terror* (London: Longmans, 1980) and *The Romantic Unconscious* (New York: New York UP, 1989); Robert Miles, *Gothic Writing, 1750-1820: A Genealogy* (London: Routledge, 1993); and Jacqueline Howard, *Reading Gothic Fiction: A Bakhtinian Approach* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994).

3. Helpful discussions of feminism's participation in the ideological construction of gender can be found in Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990); Denise Riley, *Am I That Name?: Feminism and the Category of "Women" in History* (New York: Macmillan, 1988); Sherry B. Ortner and Harriet Whitehead, eds., *Sexual Meanings: The Cultural Construction of Sexuality* (New York: Cambridge UP, 1981); and Elizabeth Meese, *Crossing the Double-Cross: The Practice of Feminist Criticism* (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1986).

4. See the provocative discussion of Montagu and early theories of the gothic in Harriet Guest, "The Wanton Muse: Politics and Gender in Gothic Theory After 1760," in *Beyond Romanticism: New Approaches to Texts and Contexts, 1780-1832* (London: Routledge, 1992), 127-38.

5. Gary Kelly claims that the Radcliffe heroines' "disciplined inwardness clearly indicates that they are heroines of a particularly professional middle-class culture and ideology, albeit a culture and ideology coloured by courtly aristocratic literature depicting nobility of sentiment." Such heroines have no public existence; they "are entirely private and domestic beings or they are the means of transferring property and power from one man to another" (see his *English Fiction of the Romantic Period* [London: Longmans, 1989], 53). On the same subject, also see Mary Poovey, "Ideology and *The Mysteries of Udolpho*," *Criticism* 21 (1979), 307-30; and Kate Ellis, *The Contested Castle: Gothic Novels and the Subversion of Domestic Ideology* (Urbana: U of Illinois P, 1989). On the similarity between female gothic novels and slave narratives, see Kari J. Winter, *Subjects of Slavery, Agents of Change: Women and Power in Gothic Novels and Slave Narratives, 1790-1865* (Athens: U of Georgia P, 1992).

6. See Maurice Lévy, *Le Roman "gothique" anglais, 1764-1824* (Toulouse: Association des Publications de la Faculté des Lettres et Sciences Humaines de Toulouse, 1968), and Alastair Fowler, "The Life and Death of Literary Forms," *New Directions in Literary History*, ed. Ralph Cohen (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1974), 77-94.

7. One of the most important contributions to the criticism of the gothic has been made by recent feminist critics who have countered the assumption of such critics as Leslie Fiedler and G. R. Thompson, both of whom have argued that the great horror in gothic fiction is the recognition of the evil other as oneself, thereby situating the focus of the gothic in the psychological realm rather than the social or economic. In contrast, DeLamotte, Doody, Poovey, and Russ all situate the horror for female gothic writers in the external world of economic exploitation and patriarchal corruption. My analysis differs from theirs in subscribing to a view of the "self" as shaped by postmodernist assumptions, that is, that what we call the "self" is a series of discursive, shifting postures.

8. See the extremely suggestive discussion of "Gothic Drama and National Crisis" in Paula R. Backsheider, *Spectacular Politics: Theatrical Power and Mass Culture in Early Modern England* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins UP, 1993), 149-234. And for the best discussion of the stock tropes of melodrama, see Peter Brooks, *The Melodramatic Imagination* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1976), 3; 16-17; Laura Mulvey, "Notes on Sirk and Melodrama," *Movie* 25 (1977-78), 53.

9. *New French Feminisms*, eds. Elaine Marks and Isabelle de Courtivron (New York: Schocken, 1981), 96.

10. My reading of masochism differs substantially from the position taken recently by Michelle Masse, *In the Name of Love: Women, Masochism, and the Gothic* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1992). Whereas Masse sees women as victimized, I have taken a poststructuralist position and seen them as parodically playing with the pose of victimization. I do admire, however, her use of Freud's essay "A Child is Being Beaten" as a theoretical paradigm.

11. Deleuze and Guattari, *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, vol. 1, trans. Robert Hurley, Mark Seem, and Helen Lane (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1983); John Brenkman, *Culture and Domination* (Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1987), 175.

12. For a fuller critique of Wollstonecraft's "betrayal" of women, see Cora Kaplan, *Sea Changes: Culture and Feminism* (London: Verso, 1986), pp. 39, 41, 155. Also see Nancy Chodorow, *The Reproduction of Mothering: Psychoanalysis and the Sociology of Gender* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1978); Carol Gilligan, *In a Different Voice: Psychological Theory and Women's Development* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1982).

13. I am indebted to the profoundly suggestive reading of "broken gender and economic sex" in Ivan Illich, *Gender* (Berkeley: Heyday, 1982), 22-66.

14. On *homo clausus*, see Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process, vol. 1: The History of Manners*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York: Pantheon, 1978), 249-60; and on the carnivalesque body, see Michel Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, trans. Helena Iswolsky (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1968); Gary Kelly, *Women, Writing, and Revolution: 1790-1827* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1993), 3-5. I cannot do justice here to Kelly's important study, but his two theoretical chapters in this volume are in my opinion groundbreaking essays. Also see Edward Shorter, *A History of Women's Bodies* (London: 1982); Dorinda Outram, *The Body and the French Revolution: Sex, Class, and Political Culture* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1989); Lynn Hunt, *Politics, Culture, and Class in the French Revolution* (Berkeley: U of California P, 1984); and Peter Brooks, *Body Work: Objects of Desire in Modern Narrative* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1993).

15. For a discussion of how the domesticated family functioned as the "cradle" for a new class culture, see Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family For-*

tunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850 (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 1987). They make the observation: "Public was not really public and private not really private despite the potent imagery of 'separate spheres.' Both were ideological constructs with specific meaning which must be understood as products of a particular historical time" (p. 33). And for related arguments on the construction of the domestic ideology, see Nancy Armstrong's *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel* (Oxford: Oxford UP, 1987).

16. Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: Volume I: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage, 1980), 148. For a related discussion, see Isaac D. Balbus, "Disciplining Women: Michel Foucault and the Power of Feminist Discourse," *Praxis International* 5 (1986), 466-83.

17. See Roland Barthes, *S/Z*, trans. R. Miller (London: Cape, 1975), 19.

18. Ronald Paulson, *Representations of Revolutions: 1789-1820* (New Haven: Yale UP, 1983), 8.

19. See Elizabeth Bronfen, *Over Her Dead Body: Death, Femininity, and the Aesthetic* (Manchester: Manchester UP, 1992), 28; and on the complex issue of whether or not Freud explains the gothic of the gothic explains Freud, see Peter Thorslev, *Romantic Contraries* (New York: Yale UP, 1981); and Terry Castle, "Phantasmagoria: Spectral Technology and the Metaphorics of Modern Reverie," *Critical Inquiry* 15 (1988), 26-61.